

The "Light" of the Timuria: Jahan Ara Begum's Patronage, Piety, and Poetry in 17th-century Mughal India

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Islamic theology and jurisprudence formed the underpinnings for the Timurid-Mughal imperial ideology and legitimized their 16th-century conquest of and expansion in India. Sufism and its mystical belief systems, on the other hand, had a significant influence on the socio-political psyche of the imperial line. The innate constructions of Sufism attended some of the most visceral and deeply felt social and spiritual needs of the Mughal elite and commoners that traditional Islam may not have addressed. Sufi saints served as political and social advisors to Mughal emperors and their retinue where their intercession was informed by religious texts and Sufi ideology and locally configured frames of spirituality. The inextricable connection of the imperial family to Sufi institutions was galvanized by marrying state to household, requiring women to "visibly" represent the pietistic objectives of the ruling house through their largesse. These Mughal "enunciations", according to Ebba Koch, "emerged as forms of communication through a topos of symbols"[1] that "gendered" the Mughal landscape and, further, participated in what Gulru Necipoglu has described as "staging" for the performance of "optical politics" as a direct function of imperial patronage.[2] The highly politicized and "staged" religiosity of royal women thereby sustained the sovereign and the historical memory of the patrilineal line. Emperor Shah Jahan's (r. 1627–58) daughter, Jahan Ara Begum (1614–81) fully participated in the patterns of political patriarchy and her father's imperial vision by constructing her "stage" through her Sufi affiliations, prodigious patronage, and literary prowess. The princess's contributions fully conformed to the Mughal dictates imposed on her gender and enabled her to assert her spiritual and imperial authority as an agent of her own representation.

This essay examines the Jami Masjid in Agra (1648) (figure 2) and the mosque of the Sufi saint Mullah Shah Badakhshi in Srinagar, Kashmir (1649–50) (figure 3) as "translations" or visual articulations of the dual personas of the Mughal princess Jahanara Begum, daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan (c. 1592–1666). The study explores the duality of the princess's character as exemplified in the design of the mosques and in her biographical Sufi treatise, *Risala-i Sahibiyah*,[3] as functions of the princess's imperial obligations and her spiritual affinities within the Sufi Qadiriyah[4] order and as "controlled definitions" of her identity. Further, the study considers the unmarried princess's spiritual authority as a *piri-muridi*[5] that legitimized her "lighting the light of the Timuria" into perpetuity.[6] The study pays particular attention to issues of identity, religion, and gender, and how these are at play in the narratives of the *Sahibiyah* and in Jahan Ara's authorial constructions of self. According to Tamiya Zaman, the dynamics of personal narratives written during Shah Jahan's reign were particularly conditioned by subjectivities "that existed simultaneously" as both personal and imperial prerogatives.[7]

1
"Woman with Flower", North India, Mughal, second half of 17th century. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 22.8 x 15 cm. Photograph © 2008, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Asiatic Curator's Fund, 60.1139.

While there are no verified images of Jahan Ara Begum, the author has used the formal elements of this work to conjecture or "imagine" that this may be a portrait of the princess.

Jahan Ara's Sufi Persona

Mughal political alignment with Sufism and particularly the Chishtiyah order[8] reflected the exclusive relationship between Sufis and emperors and what Ebba Koch regards as "exponents of worldly and spiritual powers".[9] Physically and spiritually the Sufi-Sovereign affiliation established an "aura of sanctity"[10] around the imperial family and metaphysically around Mughal-sponsored shrines and mosques. Jahan Ara Begum's Sufi association and subsequent spiritual ascension under the guidance of her *pir* Mullah Shah Badakhshi (1585–1661)[11] extended the imperial imperatives imposed on her class and gender. The princess reached beyond her relegated role of female agency in service of the state and was motivated to seek an elevated Sufi state or a *piri-muridi*[12] that legitimized her spiritual authority in making claims to an enduring Timurid-Mughal legacy. Jahan Ara writes in the *Sahibiyah*:

> In our family no one took the step on the path to seek God or the truth that would light the Timurid lamp eternally. I was grateful for having received this great fortune and wealth. There was no end to my happiness.[13]

After "lighting" the Timurid lamp, Jahan Ara claims her "rightful" place on the same mantle as the prophet Muhammad, his revered companions, and Mullah Shah:

> Even though it is not acceptable for a *faqira* to talk about one-self, since meeting the others in my spiritual reverie last night and being blessed with eternal happiness, I need to include myself among the *Zumrah*[14] of this group.[15]

Jahan Ara's elevated status is substantiated in the writings of Mullah Shah's seventeenth biographer and disciple Tawakkul Beg:

> She passed through all the normal visions and attained a pure union with God and gained an intuitive perception. Mullah Shah said of her, "She has attained so extraordinary a development of the mystical knowledge that she is worthy of

2
East elevation at entrance to Jami Masjid, Agra.
Photograph: Gayatri W. Ugra.



being my representative if she were not a woman."[16]

Jahan Ara Begum, oldest daughter of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, assumed the title of Begum Saheba, chief queen, at age 17 upon her mother's untimely death in 1631.[17] As the first lady of the harem, Jahan Ara functioned as Shah Jahan's queen consort and was privy to his political workings and artistic production. The impressionable young princess may have been particularly influenced by the import her father placed on recording, illustrating, and controlling the representation of the details of his life.[18] Shah Jahan's detailed biographies, however, are silent on the personal lives and particulars of the royal women. The omission privileges Jahan Ara's *Sahibiyah* as both precious and compelling in making transparent the inner workings of an imperial female mind. The 39 pages of the treatise include the princess's mystical poetic ruminations, the biography of her *pir* Mullah Shah Badakhshi, her relationship with her brother Dara Shikoh (1615–59),[19] her discipleship and initiation into the Qadiriyah order, and the intense interiority of her mystical experience and subsequent spiritual ascension.

Jami Masjid, Agra

In 1637, after spending six months in Kashmir, Jahan Ara reluctantly and with a "spiritually heavy heart" left the "aura" of Mullah Shah and returned to Agra, the Mughal capital. In addition to the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan had several urban projects in Agra. Inayat Khan indicates Shah Jahan ordered the construction of a large forecourt, bazaar, and a congregation mosque across from the Agra fort in front of the Delhi gate.[20] Still in the reverie of her mystical wisdom and spiritual achievements in Kashmir, Jahan Ara "begged that the new sacred place of worship might be erected out of her personal funds".[21] The Agra mosque is based on a standard Shahjahani archetype appropriated from the Sultanate architecture of Delhi:[22] an oblong prayer hall formed of vaulted bays or rooms arranged in a row with a dominant central *pishtaq* (a high portal) surmounted by three domes (see figure 2). One enters the courtyard on axis to the almost 30-metre-high *pishtaq* framing the main arch (figure 4). An extraordinary feature of the central *pishtaq* is the subject and content of the inscriptions framing the entrance to the mihrab that "enunciate" Jahan Ara's dual personas in verse. The Persian eulogies, in Naskhi script, boldly praise the details of the mosque and Jahan Ara Begum's dual personas:

> It [the Jami Masjid] was built by her order who is high in dignity, who is as elevated as the firmament on which it sits, screened with curtains bright as the sun, possessing a glorious palace as illuminated as her wisdom, veiled with chastity, the most revered of the ladies of the age, the pride of her gender, the princess of the realm, the possessor of the three domes as worldly crowns, the chosen of the people of the world, the most honored of the issue of the head of the Faithful, Jahan Ara Begum.[23]



3
Perspective view into courtyard from southeast side of Mullah Shah Badakhshi Mosque, Srinagar. Photograph: Afshan Bokhari.



4
Inscriptions of Jahan Ara on central *pishtaq* of Jami Masjid, Agra. Photograph: Gayatri W. Ugra.

The laudatory statement of Jahan Ara's virtues is metaphorically woven in with the mosque's architectural features to the extent that one perceives in the dialectic of verse relating to the structure, the personification of the princess. That the princess's name was not merely inscribed but profusely eulogized on a congregation mosque in the capital city and seat of government may certainly indicate the ineffectual *ulema* (scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law), during Shah Jahan's reign but more telling is how the encomiums transparently present an imperial female as a spiritual and royal exemplar among women. Further, the poetic narratives reference Jahan Ara's dual persona and authenticate her place in both imperial and Sufi hierarchy.

A highly "gendered" feature in the Agra mosque that commemorates Jahan Ara's spiritual persona is in the zenana or women's section prayer halls in the north and south wings of the sanctuary (figure 6). These are not used by local women for daily or Friday prayers; the marble screened rooms are reserved for the exclusive use of women on Thursday evenings for devotional Sufi rituals. During the ceremony, women light incense and make flower and candle effigies while performing the *sufiana-kalam* or mystical poetry.[24] At the end, the group recites a prayer for Jahan Ara or Fatima Begum[25] their patron saint and the patron of the mosque. They dip their palms in henna and leave the "mark" of their spiritual devotion on the *qibla* wall (figure 5). Jahan Ara's spiritual authority is evoked and memorialized in the performative site of her patronage through ritualized Sufi practice. Whether this ritual in the zenana is specific to the 20th and 21st centuries, or is an earlier practice, is unknown. However, what is significant is that, compared to mosque-centred Islam where women are noticeable by virtue of their absence rather than incorporation into the religious body and public ritual, these contemporary women – like their "sister" and patron saint Jahan Ara – have found in the sacred sphere of Sufism, and in the auxiliary space of the zenana, the representation of a less prescriptive and more practised Islam in the devotional rituals of its mysticism.

Inscriptional programmes on Mughal mosques were purposeful. They played a socio-political role in conveying the sovereign's religious policies and attitudes, and at times constructed literary allegories

of his rule.[26] Mughal standards for mosque epigraphy employed complete *surahs* or verses from the *Quran* to adorn significant locations of the mosque. The Mughal epigraphical programme inscribed on most Shahjahani mosques followed imperial patterns until the unprecedented encomiums on the *pishtaq* of the Agra Jami Masjid. The Persian eulogies in the Agra mosque are unique features that have no Mughal precedent among female-sponsored congregation mosques. Only two imperial women commissioned mosques prior to Jahan Ara Begum. The mother of Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27), Maryam al-Zamani, commissioned the Begum Shahi Masjid in Lahore, Pakistan in 1611. The modest Patthar Mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir was commissioned by the "prescient feminist" Nur Jahan, wife of Emperor Jahangir, and built in 1620.[27] The epigraphical programme of each female-sponsored mosque conforms to imperial standards without grandiose Persian praises or banner representations of the patroness.

Mullah Shah Badakhshi Mosque, Srinagar

In 1650, two years after the construction of the Agra mosque, Jahan Ara commissioned the Mullah Shah Badakhshi Mosque located in Srinagar, Kashmir. Drawing upon the newly articulated epigraphical idioms in Agra, the intensity of Jahan Ara's religiosity finds its fullest expression in the mosque dedicated to her *pir* Mullah Shah. The overall structure is compact in its organization and exhibits an attempt towards a standard Shahjahani typology including baluster columns, multi-cusped arches, and an "intuitive" symmetry in the overall design of the plan and elevation. The mosque is both inward- and outward-facing in its organization and embellishment with many of its distinguishing features articulated on each exterior wall of the complex. A comprehensive analysis of the mosque complex is beyond the scope of this study; however, the overall design and plan "organically" emerges conveying Shahjahani standards and idioms.

Remarkable features on the southern elevation are the bands of Persian poetic verses inscribed within four framed panels of the blind arches (figure 7). Based on the stylistic composition of each verse and the unique ending (Persian *omad*, indicating "he has come" or "arrived"), one suspects that Shah Jahan's court poet Abu Talib Kalim



5

Henna hand prints on *qibla* wall of zenana section, Jami Masjid, Agra. Photograph: Afshan Bokhari.



6

Southern elevation arcade with *chhatris*, *chajjas*, and multi-cusped arches. Jami Masjid, Agra. Photograph: Gayatri W. Ugra.



7
Panels of Persian inscriptions over blind arches, Mullah Badakhshi Mosque, Srinagar. Photograph: Karoki Lewis.

(d. 1650) may be the author.[28] A complete translation of the verses is not possible due to their ruinous state. However, the following verses are mostly intact and translated:

> The guide for the lost heart has come [*omad*]. The conquest of the hearts is all in His hands. The Beloved, to fill the goblet has come [*omad*]. This is the second Mecca. For circumambulation the enlightened King has come [*omad*]. The chronogram from God has come [*omad*].

During the Timurid era, the tendency to incorporate Persian poetry on sacred monuments was prevalent and this increased under the Safavids. The poetic verses were usually written in large Thuluth script within well-defined borders and placed within view. According to Sunil Sharma, the Timurid and Safavid precedents in poetry reached exceptional literary and aesthetic heights during Shah Jahan's reign to the extent that Sharma considers the meta-creative or the poetry-architecture dialectic as an imperial instrument for conveying ideological and political messages.[29] In the Mullah Shah Mosque, Kalim's "veiled" meaning or "inner-message" is communicated to the Sufi-devout through poetic language. The embedded meanings of the verses conform to Jahan Ara's public persona: simultaneously revealing and hiding the complexities and dualities of her metaphysical "aura" and ideology. Jahan Ara's official sanction of these verses indicates deliberate associations of the Persian verses with her own poetry in the *Sahibiyah* and with her imperial and spiritual authority. Jahan Ara's poetry also expresses the duality of Mullah Shah's identity and her relationship with him:

> Panel: The guide for the lost heart has come.
> *Sahibiyah*: You, Mullah Shah, who have come, are the guide to my heart.
> Panel: The conquest of the hearts is all in His hands. The Beloved, to fill the goblet has come.
> *Sahibiyah*: Oh, Mullah Shah, you are the Beloved who conquers and fills the hearts like empty goblets.

Persian poetry on the Mullah Shah Mosque in its prescribed role "translates" the

vision of Jahan Ara's piety into the discursive realm of Sufi poetry and ideology and locates her spiritual and imperial authority through her monumental patronage. The poetic verses and their abstract language of love inextricably link Jahan Ara's relationship with Mullah Shah as both her "beloved" and her *pir*. The panels exalt the spiritual attributes of Mullah Shah and by proxy, of Jahan Ara. The inscriptions serve as physical extensions and representations of Jahan Ara's spiritual identity in poetic verse and her imperial authority as the patron of the mosque. As the devoted Sufi disciple, Jahan Ara stands at the nexus of Mullah Shah and the mosque's "aura of sanctity" and publicly conveys her dual persona within the "subtext" of her own poetry.

Conclusion

Jahan Ara Begum's literary and architectural contributions offer a field of analysis of her two personas – a spiritual authority in an elevated state of *piri-muridi* and an imperial authority as the Begum Saheba – as functions of her piety (figure 1). The physical sites of the princess's visits and patronage mentioned in each of her treatises, map and locate the princess's spiritual and imperial ambitions and her collective responsibilities to the sovereign and the Timurid-Mughal legacy. That Jahan Ara makes marginal contributions to the Mughal landscape prior to completing her two Sufi treatises indicates the pivotal role mystical Islam played in facilitating the unmarried princess's broader participation in the socio-religious milieu of Mughal India and enabling hereditary claims to Timur's legacy. The mosques in Agra and Srinagar along with Jahan Ara's 19 other commissions are visible in the "sacred" and politically significant Mughal landscape, not as "veiled spectators" representing private female devotion but fully participating in the empire-building objectives of Timurid-Mughal imperial ideology, historical memory, and enduring legacy.

The *Risala-i Sahibiyah* affords a vignette of an imperial woman's mystical journey through which she negotiated and legitimized her official identities and reclaimed her Timurid heritage. The dual assertions enabled Jahan Ara to sustain the Timurid legacy by "lighting the lamp" of the Timuria and to profess her piety as part of imperial ideology and practical politics. Jahan Ara's engagement with Sufi practice attempts to bring a more nuanced and polyvocal understanding of mystical Islam, and women's place within it. The analysis of the *Risala-i Sahibiyah* personifies through Jahan Ara's agency the ambiguities of the feminine in Sufi hagiography and provokes questions of how the framework of mystical Islam and its seemingly "female-centred" ideology[30] may have enjoined an imperial female to cultivate, empower, and legitimize her dual persona while exploiting protocols of patronage within the boundaries of Islamic paradigms and a world of patriarchy.

NOTES

1 Ebba Koch, Lecture: "The Mughal Hunt", Harvard University, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, April, 2007. I am grateful and indebted to Ebba Koch for her insights, wisdom, and encyclopaedic knowledge in guiding my studies and analyses of the Mughals and of Jahan Ara Begum in particular. Further, Dr Sunil Sharma's critical analysis and poetic "visions" of Mughal splendour have been pivotal to my research in cultivating a comprehensive framework for historicizing Jahan Ara Begum's literary contributions.

2 For the usage of this term see G. Necipoglu-Kafadar, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces", *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993), pp. 303–04. Gulru Necipoglu uses the term "ocular politics" to denote the "instrument" of visual control used by imperial males within the Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires to spatially and socially organize royal women's visibility and hierarchy that yielded an "asymmetry of power" in gender politics.

3 Several translated and original copies of Jahan Ara Begum's *Risala-i Sahibiyah* (1640–41) Sufi manuscript have been consulted for this study. The original Persian MS has been cited in the Apa Rao Bhola Nath Library at Ahmedabad (India). The author was unable to locate this MS in the library's

holdings. See citation in the bibliography of Qamar Jahan Ali in her published Ph.D. dissertation (Aligarh Muslim University, Department of Persian): *Princess Jahan Ara Begam: her life and works* (1950), published by S.M. Hamid Ali in Karachi, 1991. A typed Persian copy of the original manuscript was published by Professor Muhammad Aslam in the *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 16/4 and 17/1, an Urdu translation of the original was published by Professor Tanvir Alvi in *Nava-yi-adab*, October 1986 (Anjuman-i-Islam Urdu Research Institute of Bombay, India), pp. 34–51. An unpublished English translation of Alvi's Urdu work was completed by Dr Yunus Jaffrey and Afshan Bokhari in Delhi, January 2007, and an unpublished English translation of Aslam's Persian copy completed by Dr Sunil Sharma in Cambridge, MA, 2007.

4 The Qadiriyah order, considered the earliest of the Muslim formal mystic Sufi orders and based primarily upon the principles of Shari'ah, was founded by the Hanbali theologian 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1078–1162) in Baghdad, Iraq. Al-Jilani may have intended the few rituals he prescribed to extend only to his small circle of followers, but his sons broadened this community into an order and encouraged its spread into North Africa, Central Asia, and especially India. For a general overview and history of the Qadiriyah order in India and Pakistan, see Arthur Buehler, "The Indo-Pak Qadiriyya", *Journal of the History of Sufism* (Special Issue, the Qadiriyya Order), and Fatima Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India During 16th–18th Century* (Delhi, Sadr Bazaar: Jayed Press, 2005).

5 A *pir* (usually male) is a Sufi master who is well-versed in the philosophy of his particular Sufi order. A *pir* guides and counsels others on the Sufi path. Women were generally disallowed this revered status. However, those who did ascend to the level of a *pir* through observance of Sufi doctrine, "union with the divine", constant prayer, etc. would informally earn the status of *pir-murid* (master-disciple). For an overview of the *pir-murid* state, see Kelly Pemberton, "Muslim Women Mystics and Female Spiritual Authority in South Asian Sufism", in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, eds. P. Stewart and A. Strathern (Durham: North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 3–39. Please note: Though the term *piri-muridi* is not used in the context of Sufism earlier than the 20th century, the author has classified Jahan Ara's spiritual persona thus to facilitate discussion and to distinguish her rank within the Qadiriyah order.

6 See Ebba Koch's explanation for "divine effulgence": "A Persian concept of a manifestation of the sacred element of fire or light in the person of the rightful ruler, which had evidently endured from Sasanian times but without its original Zoroastrian implications", in "The Delhi of the Mughals Prior to Shahjahanabad as Reflected in the Patterns of Imperial Visits", in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 174. Further, mosque lamps were used to "visualize" God in a religious setting. In an imperial context the "light" of the lamp was a metaphor appropriated to describe the "semi-divine" nature or power of reigning emperors like the Timurid and later Mughal dynasty. The light of the lamp is a visual and a metaphysical "re-creation" of God's light as well as a symbol for an enduring imperial dynasty.

7 Tamiya R. Zaman, "Inscribing Empire: Sovereignty and Subjectivity in Mughal Memoirs", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007, pp. 124–31.

8 A Muslim Sufi order in India and Pakistan, named after Chisht – the village in which the founder of the order, Abu Ishaq of Syria had settled. The mystical tradition was brought to India by Khwajah Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti in the 12th century. The Chishtiyah gained prominence during Emperor Akbar's rule (1556–1605) and became intrinsic to Mughal imperial ideology. For an overview of the intrinsic relationship between the Mughal ideology and Sufism, see J.F. Richards, "The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir", in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J.F. Richards, South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison Publication Series, no. 3 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 252–85; and D.E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 89–91.

9 Ebba Koch in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays*, p. 176.

10 Kishwar Rizvi, "Gendered Patronage: Women and Benevolence during the Early Safavid Empire", in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 123–53. Rizvi analyses the Safavid precedent and tradition of cultivating a shrine-specific "imperial aura" and culture to visibly "enact their vision of rulership".

11 For a biographical sketch of Mullah Shah Badakhshi's life and works see Tawakkul Beg's Sufi treatise, *Nuskhah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi* (Persian), MS British Museum, 3203, Rotograph (No. 138), 1667.

12 See Kelly Pemberton's contemporary classification of this liminal Sufi-devout state, in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity-Making*, pp. 3–39.

13 *Risala-i Sahibiyah*, Persian trans. by Sharma, pp. 2–3, and Urdu trans. by Jaffrey, p. 5.

14 Arabic for "sacred group" or the blessed group given entry into Paradise. Ref. Sahih Al-Bukhari

hadith #2834 for use in Islamic or religious context.

15 *Risala-i Sahibiyah*, Persian trans. by Sharma, p. 13.

16 Tawakkul Beg Kulabi, *Nuskhah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi*, Or. #3203, pp. 11–14.

17 For a comprehensive and categorical survey on Jahan Ara Begum's life, see Nausheen Jaffrey, "Jahan Ara Begum: A Biographical Study 1614–81 A.D.", M.Phil. dissertation in history and culture, Jamia Millia Islamia University, 1997.

18 Ebba Koch in *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology, Collected Essays*, p. 132.

19 Dara Shikoh introduced Jahan Ara to the Sufi saint Mian Mir in Lahore in 1638 and subsequently to Mullah Shah for her initiation. See Hasrat Bikrama Jit's biographical work on Dara Shikoh: *Dārā Shikūh – life and works* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982), p. 28.

20 W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, eds. and trans., *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 205–06.

21 Ibid., p. 205.

22 E. Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development (1526–1858)* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1991), p. 54.

23 Muhammad Latif, *Agra, Historical and Descriptive* (Calcutta, 1896), pp. 186–88. The author has relied on Latif's Persian text of the *pishtaq* inscriptions on the Agra mosque for the translation in English. The directed translation was completed in December 2006, with the invaluable assistance of Dr Yunus Jaffrey in Delhi.

24 For a closer study of the *sufiana-kalam* tradition in South Asia, see Shemeem Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual Devotional Practices in Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). In medieval and contemporary South Asia, female singers have performed *sufiana-kalam* at Sufi shrines and in concerts, folk festivals, and domestic life, while male singers assume the female voice when singing the myths of heroines in *qawwali* and *sufiana-kalam*.

25 Jahan Ara's initiation into the Qadiriyah order included investing her Sufi persona with a new name. She was given the name Fatima. See Tawakkul Beg, *Nuskhah-i Ahwal-i-Shahi*, Or. #3203, p. 54.

26 For an overview of the symbolic role of the inscriptional programme on Shahjahani mosques, see Wayne E. Begley "The Symbolic Role of Calligraphy on Three Imperial Mosques of Shah Jahan", in *Kaladarsana, American Studies in the Art of India*, ed. Joanna G. Williams (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 7–18.

27 It is noteworthy that only two Mughal women built mosques prior to Jahan Ara, subsequent to the completion of the Agra Masjid in 1650; however, four private and congregation mosques were commissioned by imperial females and constructed in Shah Jahan's new capital Shahjahanabad or Delhi. Each mosque emulates the Jami Masjid in its formal planning and to some extent its details, but each also conforms to the traditional epigraphical programme for mosques and none includes Persian encomiums or dedications praising the female patron. Though praises for the patroness are excluded in the female-sponsored mosques built after the Jami Masjid, it is clear that Jahan Ara's bold contribution of a congregation mosque in a Mughal capital sanctioned and emboldened other imperial females to follow her example. For an overview and further references, see Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India, The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 116–17 and 190–91. For Nur Jahan's Patthar Mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir, see Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* (Azad Kashmir: Verinag Publishers, 1991), pp. 79–81.

28 Close and comprehensive analysis of the Persian poetic verses from the exterior of Mullah Shah Mosque with Dr Sunil Sharma in Cambridge, MA, December 2006, and Dr Yunus Jaffrey in Delhi, January 2007, confirmed the court poet Abu Talib Kalim as the potential author of the inscriptions. Thackston's dissertation provided supporting literary evidence that further identifies Kalim as present in Kashmir in the late 1640s. See Thackston Wheeler's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation for a comprehensive analysis of Kalim's work and ideology: "The Poetry of Abū-Tālib Kalīm; Persian poet-laureate of Shahjahan, Mughal emperor of India", 1974, Harvard University.

29 For a "lyrical" overview of the cultural and literary "collisions" between the Safavids and Mughal courts, see Sunil Sharma, "Celebrating Writing and Books in Safavid and Mughal Court Poetry", in *Écrit et culture en Asie centrale et dans le monde turco-iranien, XIVe–XIXe siècles / Writing and Culture in Central Asia and the Turko-Iranian World, 14th–19th centuries*, eds. Francis Richard and Maria Szuppe (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 2008), pp. 12–13.

30 For an overview of the feminine element in Sufism, see Annemarie Schimmel's seminal work, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum Press, 1999).